FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Name of Action: Johnstown-Cambria County Airport Digital Airport Surveillance Radar

The Department of Defense (DoD) proposes to construct a Digital Airport Surveillance Radar (DASR) system at Johnstown-Cambria County Airport in Pennsylvania. This proposed action is part of the National Airspace System (NAS) Program, developed by the Federal Aviation Administration in cooperation with the DoD to modernize approach control systems in the United States and its territories. DASR is a DoD-lead contract to replace analog air traffic control systems with state-of-the-art digital air traffic control equipment on U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Air Force bases throughout the country. The implementation of the NAS program, which also includes the installation of DoD Advanced Automation System digital radar display terminals and Voice Communications Switching Systems at DoD bases, was previously evaluated in a programmatic Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact (1995).

The environmental assessment for Johnstown-Cambria County Airport addresses the site-specific impacts of locating a DASR system at Johnstown-Cambria County Airport, and evaluates the consequences of the DASR system construction on both the natural and man-made environments. The Automation System and Voice Switch components of the NAS program at Johnstown-Cambria County Airport would be located within existing buildings, and impacts are anticipated to be minor. The primary consequences of the DASR system evaluated in the environmental assessment involve the construction and operation of a DASR system at Johnstown-Cambria County Airport.

The proposed DASR system, designated as model ASR-11, would contribute to the 258 ATCS mission by allowing personnel to train with state-of-the-art radar equipment, given the increased capabilities of the digital technology. In addition, the ASR-11 would improve radar presence at Johnstown-Cambria County Airport, provide additional weather data, and provide digital data input to proposed new digital automation system air traffic controller displays. The proposed new DASR system will serve to accurately locate aircraft in terms of range, azimuth, and latitude; provide information regarding aircraft identification code; identify emergency conditions; and report six discrete weather precipitation levels.

The No Action alternative would deprive the 258 ATCS of state-of-the-art equipment for training, and would deny Johnstown-Cambria County Airport of the improved technology (system reliability/ performance, weather data) offered by the new DASR system; thus, this alternative was not chosen. Three alternative sites (Site 4, Site 5, and Site 7), all of which are located within the airport boundaries, were evaluated for location of the ASR-11. Site 4 and Site 5 are located approximately 600 feet from each other within a field of mowed grass on the southern side of Fox Run Road. The eastern airport boundary, lined with trees, is located immediately to the east of these two sites. Site 7 is located adjacent to the northern boundary of the airport, specifically on the north side of Airport Road within a paved area now used as a vehicle storage area. Any of the three sites would be acceptable from an environmental perspective; however, Site 7 would potentially require noise and visual impact mitigation measures that would not be required if either Site 4 or Site 5 were chosen. Due to operational and other base considerations, the USAF has selected Site 5 as the preferred ASR-11 location.

If Site 4 or 5 were selected as the preferred alternative location for the ASR-11, no significant adverse impacts associated with land use, socioeconomics, noise, air quality, surface water, biological resources, or cultural resources would be anticipated. A wooded area to the east of the property boundary provides a visual barrier and noise buffer for property adjacent to Site 4 and Site 5. Selection of either of these sites would allow for future development opportunities within adjacent airport areas, including a regional jet maintenance facility or airport industrial park. Excavation at either Site 4 or Site 5 could encounter contaminated soil that resulted from a former fuel tank farm nearby. All hazardous materials would be handled and disposed of in accordance with all applicable airport policies and regulations. Selection of Site 4 would result in a 775-foot unpaved access road, in addition to trenching activities for telephone, electric and fiber optic services for a distance of 775 feet, 600 feet and 1,500 feet, respectively. Selection of Site 5 would result in a 100-foot unpaved access road, in addition to trenching activities for telephone, electric and fiber optic services for a distance of 100 feet, 1,000 feet and 1,960 feet, respectively.

If Site 7 were selected as the preferred alternative location for the ASR-11, no significant adverse impacts associated with land use, air quality, surface water, biological resources, or cultural resources would be anticipated. Contaminated soil could be encountered at Site 7 due to its location within an existing motor pool. A single private residence is located approximately 125 feet from Site 7, leading to both visual impact and noise impact concerns. Proper mitigation measures to avoid significant adverse visual and noise impacts to the nearby residence would be required if Site 7 were chosen. In the absence of successful mitigation measures at Site 7, the nearby resident's possible low-income status may raise environmental justice concerns. Selection of Site 7 would require trenching activities for telephone, electric and fiber optic services for a distance of 100 feet, 1,000 feet and 1,700 feet, respectively. No access road would be required if Site 7 were chosen.

Operation of the DASR system is anticipated to have minimal long-term impacts to the natural and human environments. The radar would generate radio frequency radiation while operating. However, the radio frequency radiation generated would be safe to humans at ground level and is not anticipated to pose harm to the general population. Since locations beyond 75 feet from the ASR-11 antenna would comply with the maximum permissible exposure for peak power density, the private residence located 125 feet from Site 7 should not be adversely impacted by electromagnetic radiation generated by the radar. During the DASR system operation, fuel and other hazardous materials may be used at the site, such as engine oil and grease. However, use and disposal of any hazardous materials would occur in compliance with Johnstown-Cambria County Airport guidelines as well as applicable state and federal regulations. Consequently, it is anticipated that operational use of hazardous materials would not adversely affect the natural or human environments.

It is anticipated that few mitigation measures would be required during construction and operation of the facility. To minimize noise impacts during construction, mufflers would be used on construction equipment and vehicles. In addition, all equipment and vehicles used during construction would be maintained in good operating condition so that emissions are minimized, thus reducing the potential for air quality impacts. Dust would be managed onsite by using water or other acceptable control to wet down disturbed areas. All areas disturbed for the DASR system construction would be seeded with a grass mixture or covered with a geotextile fabric and crushed stone to stabilize the disturbed soils, in order to minimize the potential for erosion and sedimentation. Should dewatering be necessary during installation of tower footings, proper procedures for discharge of groundwater would be implemented. The proposed DASR facility would incorporate appropriate best management practices, such as vegetated swales or buffer strips, to reduce the effects of stormwater runoff from the

site. All hazardous materials used during construction would be handled and disposed of in accordance with Johnstown-Cambria County Airport guidelines and all applicable state and federal regulations. Traffic management measures would be developed to facilitate traffic flow and pedestrian access.

Mitigation measures, such as planting a hedgerow between the ASR-11 and the nearest resident, would be required to lessen the visual/aesthetic impact at Site 7. Additionally, mitigation would be required to lessen the potential for noise impact associated with the operation of the emergency generator. Selection of Site 7 may require the use of a higher-end noise attenuation enclosure than is included as part of the DASR standard design; final design should evaluate the optimal location of the emergency generator within the site so as to maximize distance between the noise source and the receptors while utilizing proposed structures to reflect the noise away from the receptors. No visual/aesthetic or noise impact mitigation measures would be required at Site 4 or Site 5.

During operation of the DASR system, fuel would be stored at an aboveground storage tank and some hazardous materials, such as equipment oil or grease, may be used at the site. Similar to the construction period, all hazardous materials utilized during operation would be used, and disposed of, in accordance with Johnstown-Cambria County Airport guidelines and all applicable state and federal regulations in order to minimize the potential for contamination.

Based on this summary of effects, along with the detailed description of the effects provided in the Environmental Assessment, I have determined that construction of the ASR-11 at Site 5, which is the site that I have selected, will not have a significant impact on the natural or human environment. For this reason, no environmental impact statement needs to be prepared.

JOSEPH MCKELVEY
Airport Executive Director
Johnstown-Cambria County Airport

4/24/03
Date